

Message Text

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46

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSC-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /070 W
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R 041145Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2835

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1722

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINR, AG

SUBJ: CHERIF BELKACEM EASED OUT

1. DECREE DATED JULY 4 IN MOST RECENT JOURNAL OFFICIEL CONFIRMS RECENT SPECULATION AND PRESS REPORTS THAT CHERIF BELKACEM HAS LOST HIS POSITION AS MINISTER OF STATE, THUS MARKING HIS OFFICIAL FALL FROM GRACE.

2. BELKACEM HAS BEEN FADING FROM LIMELIGHT SINCE JUNE 1974 AND DECREE FORMALIZES HIS DEFACTO EXPULSION FROM GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES SINCE THAT TIME. WE NOT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR AS TO REASONS BEHIND DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN HIM AND BOUMEDIENE WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT HIS DOWNFALL. IT VARIOUSLY REPORTED TO BE DISAGREEMENT OVER BOUMEDIENE'S INCREASING ONE-MAN RULE, OVER LAND REFORM PROGRAM, OVER BELKACEM'S FLAMBOYANT LIFE-STYLE, OVER RENOVATION OF FLN, AND OVER BACKGROUND OF BOUMEDIENE'S WIFE WHO REPORTEDLY ONCE BELKACEM'S MISTRESS.

3. WHATEVER CAUSE, AND DESPITE OCCASIONAL REPORTS OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN TWO AND OF PLANS FOR BELKACEM TO ASSUME NEW SUBSTANTIVE FUNCTIONS IN OFT-RUMORED GOVERNMENT SHAKEUP, BELKACEM NOW APPEARS TO BE ON SHELF, LAST HEARD OF IN FRANCE. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE
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IT UNLIKELY BOUMEDIENE WILL BELIEVE HIMSELF OBLIGED

TO MURDER HIM AS HE HAS OTHER OPPOSITIONISTS, AT LEAST AS LONG AS BELKACEM DOES NOT ENTER INTO OUTRIGHT OPPOSITION, AND BELKACEM'S EXILE FROM POWER BELIEVED LIKELY TO BE GOLDEN ONE.

4. OF ORIGINAL TWENTY-SIX IDENTIFIABLE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE REVOLUTION WHICH EMERGED FROM "REDRESSMENT" OF JUNE 1965, NINE REMAIN ACTIVE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS, SEVEN REMAIN IN ALGERIA BUT ARE INACTIVE FOR REASONS OF HEALTH OR POLITICAL DISFAVOR, FIVE ARE OVERSEAS IN OPPOSITION OR DISAFFECTION, AND FIVE ARE DEAD. NO COUNCIL MEETINGS HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY NOTED IN RECENT MEMORY AND MEMBERSHIP NEVER APPEARED TO BE FORMALIZED IN ANY CASE. OF ORIGINAL FIVE MEMBERS OF SO-CALLED "OUJDA GROUP" WHICH AT CENTER OF 1965 COUP, ONLY BOUMEDIENE HIMSELF AND MINISTER FOREIGN AFFAIRS BOUTEFLIKA REMAIN ACTIVE, AND BOUTEFLIKA APPEARS TO BE FADING, ALBEIT IN SLOW-MOTION.

5. GRADUAL FALLING FROM GRACE OF BOUMEDIENE'S OLD COMRADES IN ARMS ONE INDICATION OF BOUMEDIENE EVOLUTION TO ONE-MAN REGIME WITH ITS ATTENDANT GLORIFICATION AND RISKS. BOUMEDIENE GIVING PUBLIC STRESS ON NEED TO BRING YOUNGER ELEMENTS INTO GOVERNMENT IN EFFORT TO SOFTEN IMPACT OF THIS EVOLUTION, BUT NONE OF YOUNGER TECHNOCRATS HAVE YET EMERGED TO HOLD GENUINE POLITICAL POWER, THUS LEAVING CONTROL IN HANDS DIMINISHING NUMBER OF COUNCIL LOYALISTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REMOVAL FROM OFFICE, MINISTER COUNSELORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ALGIER01722
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750268-0571
From: ALGIERS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750883/aaaacvqx.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <02 OCT 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHERIF BELKACEM EASED OUT
TAGS: PINT, PINR, AG, (BELKACEM, CHERIF)
To: STATE PARIS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006